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# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

ON THE DAY OF

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING

FOR PEACE,

APRIL 13, 1815.

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## DISCOURSE.

PSALM 46 : 8, 9.

*Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations  
he hath made in the earth.*

*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth : he  
breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ;  
he burneth the chariot in the fire.*

**T**HE present is a period of wonders ; I had almost said, of miracles. Certainly it is a time for fervent admiration and thanksgiving. Little more than a year ago, and for many years previous, the earth was overwhelmed with a general war, destruction and desolation. Now wars have ceased to the ends of the earth. Two short months ago, most of us were expecting a summer of violent and exasperated warfare ; and were in a manner arming ourselves, to fight for our land, our homes and our families. Now we are here before the Lord, to render to Him our thanks for the restoration of peace, and that we can dwell in quiet habitations.

There is indeed a remnant of war with a piratical power ; and at another time it might appear considerable, as it may be and is distressful to some of our brethren. But, comparing it with the wars, that have ceased here, and in other parts of the earth, we can scarcely regard it as an exception from the general pacification.



We very naturally think our own times and our own affairs the most interesting and important. But really I think our own times, the period of the last twenty years or more, the most extraordinary, that have passed in the last thousand years; and the conclusion not less extraordinary, than the progress. I might have excepted the great Reformation; but I was speaking of the political state of the world. All this vast commotion and revolution, after its commencement, was carried on by one man; whose fall was as signal as his elevation. The French power was rapidly declining, when he seized the government; and he almost became the conqueror of all Europe. Nor could this remote land be exempt from the general struggle. We also were drawn into the war of the world; and were left alone to finish it with a powerful nation. It is finished; and, I suppose, we all heartily rejoice in the peace. Let us rejoice in the Lord, and render to Him our humble and hearty thanks for this great mercy.

Religion, the religion of the Holy Bible, teaches us devoutly to acknowledge his overruling Providence in causing wars to cease, and giving peace to nations. This religion also teaches us to acknowledge his overruling Providence even in the scourge of war. We do not impute to Him the wrath and the guilt of man. But he can restrain this wrath, or let it rage on and scourge the guilty nations. It is a scourge to the victors, as well as to the vanquished. War may be truly called "the scourge of God;" and it is one of the severest scourges. He can justly cause the wrath and the wickedness of man to execute his judgments; and then he can justly punish the instruments, whose thought and intent was only to execute their own wicked designs. This doctrine is clearly exemplified in the scriptural history of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

By the occasion and the text, we are led to think of the evils of war, and of the blessings of peace. Thence

will arise reasons for *gratitude* to the Almighty Ruler; and for *preserving peace*, "as much as lieth in us," as much and as long as possible.

The blessings of peace consist firstly and chiefly in exemption from the evils and miseries of war; and this exemption is most clearly and strongly perceived and felt, when it is recent.

I. We must, therefore, consider some of the evils, from which we, and mankind, are recently delivered.

Think of seven or eight hundred thousands, or a million of men, drawn together to destroy one another, with all their might and skill, and with the most forcible instruments of destruction. Think of all the men of military age in these United States, or of all the white men of twenty years of age and upward, drawn together for this sanguinary purpose. These vast numbers were engaged not only in one battle, but in many battles through a campaign. These wars were carried on not only through one year, but many years, twenty years, as many as twenty of these latter years. In some of these battles, probably, as many as sixty or seventy thousands have been killed or wounded. The battles have been frequent, and numerous, and fierce, and obstinate, and destructive, to an unparalleled degree. Then we must take into the account the mortal diseases of a camp, and the many sufferings of warfare. I think, it has been said, that a quarter part of the armies perish in a year; and sometimes in these wars the half, or the greater part. To this shocking account we must add the dreadful distresses, the famine, the ruin of the countries, through which the "overflowing scourge" passes; cities demolished, fields, regions laid desolate, and the inhabitants ruined; all the works, and arts, and joys, and comforts of man beaten down and trampled in the dust. "And woe to the conquered;" woe, woe, woe to the conquered; one woe is past, and another and another woe cometh! The countries, from which the powers of war are drawn, men, money, provisions, are

oppressed with burdens, taxes, exactions, and complicated distresses of the people, and of families. Their bread is snatched from the poor, and their living from those, who were in comfortable circumstances. Heavy imposts exhaust the resources of life. Multitudes are thrown out of business and subsistence. Almost every thing is arrested, but what contributes to supply and support the destroyer of men. Fathers, brothers, and children are torn from their families, with the probability, that they shall never see them again. The whole land and the people are oppressed, exhausted, wasted, and reduced to various wretchedness. The moral ruin of war is among its most deleterious, poisonous effects. The moral pestilence spreads through the camp, the court, the city, and the country. The great principles of religion, the laws of virtue, the sentiments and the institutions, which are most salutary to mankind, are violated, rejected and despised. Vice, iniquity and impiety abound.

The court, indeed, is already infected, and spreads the contagion through the country. These miseries generally proceed from one, or a few men, working upon the passions of mankind. Those, "who rule over men," whose office and duty it is, to watch and labor for their peace and happiness, these, possessing power, consider the people as made only for their service, made to be destroyed at their will, or for their pleasure. They regard the life of a man no more, than the life of a beast. No doubt there are exceptions. No doubt there have been rulers, who have studied and labored for the good of the people. But very commonly they have other designs, of their own will, or their own pleasure, or their own glory, or their cupidity, which they place in pursuits far distant from the people's happiness, often in those, which produce the people's misery and destruction. Yes, misery and destruction, and iniquity and wickedness are called honor, and glory, and prosperity; and the infatuated

people join in the cry, and shout in the train and the triumph of their destroyers. Yea, they are ready coolly and cheerfully to kill one another for the pleasure, or the rage of their masters.

These horrible scenes have been exhibited on this earth almost continually, ever since it has existed. They rise from the wickedness of man, or the instigation of the devil, or both together; and they are the scourges of the wickedness, whence they arise. War is always unjust, on one side, or the other, or both. It is evident, that if "the people were all righteous," if the nations and the rulers were all just, there would be no wars. There would be few or no occasions of difference, or dispute; and, if any should arise, they would be easily and equitably settled. "The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." Of the universal reign of Christ it is prophesied, "that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The hostile spirit of the world is very distant from the peaceable spirit of the Gospel.

Ambition, avarice, and sometimes revenge and hatred are the common causes of war. Such are the real causes, though other pretexts are conjured up; and pretexts are easily found, when they are wanted. But the pretended causes are seldom the real causes. The lust of dominion, or of acquisition, has been the cause of most of the wars within the memory and history of man. The rude barbarians of antiquity made no ceremony of the business, but openly and boldly marched forth to conquer, to subdue and to plunder. The civilized barbarians of later times are a little more ceremonious, and for the sake of form, or deception, they make some pretences; but their passions and motives are the same. As if a man have not business, or honor, or happiness, or trouble enough in governing ten, twenty, or thirty millions; unless, by destroying a million, he can gain a million, or the desolated land,



which they once inhabited. And commonly he must retire at last only with his loss, and triumph in the miseries of his people.

But it is said, that war is sometimes necessary in self-defence; and that it is necessary to keep up the spirit and the preparations of war, that we may be able to defend ourselves against invaders. If this position must be granted, it is all that can be granted in truth and righteousness. If all nations were governed by this principle, there would be few or no wars.

We seem to imagine, that, if there be any small pretence for fighting, we are bound in honor and justice to fight; and that it is base and pusillanimous to decline the combat. A more magnanimous justice would require a real, a great, a sufficient, an indispensable cause, before it would open the gates of slaughter and devastation. We seem to imagine, that if we can find or make some pretence against another power, we have a perfect right, and are bound in honor and justice, to destroy ourselves, or to throw ourselves into the way of destruction. There is no question about our own ability, or safety, or existence; or the lives of thousands, or the fortunes of the people. If this is honor, I would rather bear the dishonor of a small stain of reason and sober wisdom; I would even rather bear the disgrace of a little religion and christianity.

But the professed warrior values not reasons, and stops not for pretences. His business, his profession, his occupation, his glory is to destroy mankind and desolate the earth; "and all the world wonder after the beast," and many give him the highest glory of human nature. The defenders of their country have been deservedly honored and celebrated, and their memory has been precious and dearly cherished. But the dazzled mind loses sight of the motives, amidst the glare of the warrior; and transfers the honor, due to patriotism, to the lawless and ferocious conquerors and destroyers of men. It worships them, as the poor savages worship the evil spirit.

What a dark and dismal history of the world is composed of these incessant wars and ruins! Indeed they compose most of the history of mankind. What woful effects and punishments of human depravity!

This cruel rage has risen in our day to the greatest height and most enormous dominion. We rarely meet with any thing equal or similar to this period in the long records of time. The mightiest nations were engaged in mortal conflict. It seemed for a time, that all the nations were to be subdued and enslaved. The wrath and power of the conqueror were felt by all people, from the shores of the Atlantick to the shores of the Red Sea; from the Straits, which separate the continents, to the cold regions of the North Star. All seemed to fall before him, but an Island begirt with navies. But the moment, when he was ready to seize on universal empire, was the moment, when he began to fall from the height of his power. "The Lord blowed upon him with his wind," and he shrunk under the blast. The nations rose upon him, and he retired like a hunted lion. They pursued him to his domain; "he forgot his cunning;" he left them between him and his capital; they seized the seat of his empire, "and he fell like Lucifer," and lay at their mercy.

We also have felt the violence of the times. We have been harassed, and shut up, and driven into war. We know something of the slaughter, and the expense, and the various sufferings. Thousands have fallen; thousands have been distressed; thousands have been reduced; and all have been burdened with heavy taxes, and heavy prices. Money and credit have failed, and a great debt remains. These are necessary and unavoidable evils of war. There have been various successes, some defeats, and some failures of expeditions; and some signal victories and defences. The seamen have maintained their honor, and the honor of their country. Our defenders have done wonders in repelling invasion. But, though they

have several times done bravely, they have in effect gained nothing but this praise, in invading the hostile territories. But those, who were opposed to the war on principle, cannot reasonably complain of the failure of invasions. The proper subject of their complaint is, that they were ever attempted. The enemy have not been much more successful in invading us. They have taken and destroyed the Capitol; they have taken a place or two on the north-eastern borders; and have committed ravages and depredations in divers places. In several attempts they have been defeated, in some surprisingly defeated. But they could easily attack us on all quarters, and keep us in perpetual alarm, and motion, and fighting; they could do us vast damage, might take some of our towns, and occasion an enormous expense. This was our great danger, this they threatened, and we apprehended. There was no great danger, that they could penetrate far into the populous parts of the country, or could maintain their ground in it, without greater forces, than they had hitherto sent against us. But they had it in their power to harass and distress us, and force us to defend ourselves at a vast expense of blood and treasure.

If our cause were most just, our necessity most urgent, our success complete and certain; still, while the war continued, we must encounter and endure its manifold evils; still it is at best a complication of the most "sore evils under the sun;" and we have reason to be heartily glad, when they are brought to a termination. I cannot conceive of the happiness of being compelled to defend ourselves by force. We may be thankful, if we are successfully defended. But I can hardly be induced to celebrate the brilliant success, the splendor, the glory, the joy, of killing and being killed; of thousands killed and wounded, and thousands destitute, distressed and ruined. I cannot find a christian joy in destroying even our enemies. If it be a necessity and a duty, let it be done sadly and firmly, manfully and mournfully—unless our passions

must be excited, that we may perform our duty. But if we may be thankful for victory, we may be more thankful, that we are no longer constrained to strive for victory, or for defence.

Many of us have thought, that our cause was not right; or, at the most, that it was far from being sufficient for involving the country in the evils of hostility with the nation, the most powerful in the world with respect to us. These undoubtedly rejoice greatly in feeling a release from the moral, as well as the natural evils of the contest. And indeed, whether it were deemed right or wrong, I doubt not, that we can all rejoice very heartily together, that the war is ended, and peace restored.

We are relieved also from great difficulties and dangers in our internal situation. We are relieved from many and heavy burdens, though many must still remain; from many wants and sufferings; from the necessity of defending ourselves on all our coasts and borders; from violent measures, and violent exertions; from great questions and dangers respecting our rights, and the Constitution, and the principles of the Union, and the interests of the particular members. If our internal order and peace may now be preserved with equity, this is a great reason for rejoicing to patriotick minds.

II. The blessings of peace, then, are first perceived and felt in a discharge from the evils and miseries of war. We scarcely know the good, that we possess, till we have lost it; and we most feelingly perceive it, when it is restored. Yet it wou'd not be very natural, or not very wise, to plunge ourselves into misery, merely for the pleasure of being delivered. We all felt a strong sensation of joy, we raised a tumult of joy, when the sudden and glad sound of peace greeted our ears. We stopped not to doubt, or to inquire into circumstances, or conditions. Peace of any kind was joyful news. We were delighted with the very name of peace. We had experienced enough of the calamities of war, and expected deep-



er and more extensive calamities. Successes could not conceal them from us ; nor could they conceal our losses ; for we must honestly confess, that we had but alternate success. Our successes, or defences appeared to be the work, or the will, of a merciful Providence. When the news of peace arrived, we uttered the spontaneous effusions, the unrestrained sentiments of the heart, before we had time for reflection or consideration. We showed, how great a blessing we esteemed it, how greatly it was desired.

Afterwards we began to inquire ; What have we gained by the peace ? We have gained peace. Is not that enough ? What would you have more ? Would you rather have the war continued ? What have we gained by the war ? Or what should we gain, if it were continued ? We should probably gain only greater losses ; or, if we lost nothing, we could no longer expect to gain any thing from a powerful nation, released from her European engagements, and free to bend all her strength against us. If we could defend ourselves, that was enough for us to expect or hope. In the mean time, this defence would have cost us dear ; and after all, we should do well, if we could end, where we began. The times are changed, and we are changed with them. The great powers of the world are changed. When we began, the predominant powers were on our side. We might flatter ourselves, that we could do what we would, and accomplish all our plans. But such is the foresight of man ! That flattering hour was an evil hour. What mortal man could foresee the surprising turn of affairs in the world ? In process of time, and of no long time, the powers were turned against us ; or left us to cope alone with a nation, which we must acknowledge to be very formidable. It was time for us to change likewise. It was a time for peace, if we could make it. To this all must assent ; if we cannot agree, that it was a time for war, when we did make it. It is better to repent, to change our mind and conduct, than to

persist in a ruinous course; and it had become necessary.

It is said, that we have obtained nothing of all the objects, to which we pretended. Our pretensions were not right, it is right, that they should be relinquished. If they were right, but impossible to be obtained, we could not perform impossibilities. If we have done wrong, the wrong was in making the war, rather than in making the peace. We presume, that all prefer the peace to war, with all the disadvantages and failures, with which it is charged.

Again it is said, that we have lost several valuable advantages, which we before quietly possessed. A part of the territory, that we held as our own, is now made questionable, and is actually out of our hands; and some valuable privileges in the fisheries and in commerce, which we held by treaty, are now either refused, or made to depend on the will of the government, which claims the right to them. This is not denied. But is it not better to sit down with this loss, than to incur a greater? Can we not comfort ourselves with the consideration, that the loss and damage are not so great, as they might have been? In truth, as these rights originally belonged to the enemy, and as we had lost our share in them by the war, we could not recover them, but by force on our part, or by good will on their part, or by commutation; neither of which, as it appears, was sufficient for the purpose.

But it may be inquired; "Where is boasting then?" What reason have we for boasting? What great praise and glory can we take to ourselves? Truly, I shall not pretend to prove the right or the propriety of boasting, or of praising ourselves, or of glorying in ourselves? We have a peace, let us be thankful. Men of the greatest and most real worth are not commonly the most boastful. The truly great and good WASHINGTON, the grand instrument of achieving our Independence, the attracting centre of our Union, was

no boaster. Surely it becomes us to be modest, humble, and thankful.

Something, however, we may have gained. We may have gained experience. We may know by experience the evils of war. We may know, if we will, "the things that belong to our peace." We may know the ways of war, "and the ways of peace," and the wide difference. We may learn to avoid the former, and follow the latter, "to refuse the evil, and choose the good;" and we have strong reasons "to seek peace and ensue it" for some time to come. But we must not expect too much from this advantage. "There is no remembrance of former things," as we are taught by Solomon; and his words are proved by experience. "The word of the Lord, the word of divine wisdom, endureth forever."

We have a peace, then, let us be thankful. If we can boast no more, let us be thankful. Let us acknowledge it as a great gift of divine mercy. "It is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. Let us be still, and know that he is God."

"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. He maketh peace in our borders, and filleth us with the finest of the wheat. We hear no more the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Violence is no more heard in our land; wasting nor destruction within our borders. Joy and gladness are found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Now the captives are returning from their gloomy prisons to gladden the hearts of their mourning families. Now the soldiers are returning from the field of battle to the relations of civil life. They have proved their bravery, and won the applause of their country; may they preserve by their virtue the praise, which they have acquired by their valour. Now the arts, and toils, and perils of war are changed for the arts, and works, and fruits of peace. The artists are returning to their occupations, from which they had

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long desisted in sad and pining inaction. The cheer-  
ful sound of industry begins to be heard in the streets.  
The merchants are resuming their enterprize, and  
sending forth their ships to exchange the commodities  
of the various world. The hardy mariners may now  
find their wonted employ, and peacefully traverse the  
ocean, and joyfully hail all that they meet, without fear  
of capture. The husbandman raises "the precious  
fruits of the earth," no longer to feed a devouring and  
deadly war, but to nourish the peaceable inhabitants  
of the land, and to supply an useful, enlivening and  
enriching commerce. All the resources of an exten-  
sive people may now be employed to increase the tran-  
quil arts, and improvements, and enjoyments of civil  
life and society. There are, indeed, and there must  
continue to be great publick demands upon them; but  
these, we suppose, will not be augmented by new and  
increasing demands. The government will be in a  
great degree disembarassed, and will find a supply in  
the returning activity and prosperity of the people;  
a prosperity, which may slowly but surely return, if we  
have learned wisdom by the evils, that we have suffered.  
The contemplative mind delights to view a people  
freed from the struggles and the ravages of war; and  
flourishing in the works and enjoyments of peace and  
prosperity. Religion rejoices in the peace and hap-  
piness of man, and in seeing an end to so many mis-  
eries and bitter fruits of sin. The fruit of religion is  
peace and benevolence. "The fruit of the Spirit is  
love, joy, peace." The Gospel is emphatically styled  
the Gospel of Peace. Religion mourns, when the  
hostile passions reign. She mourns over the sins and  
the ruins of man. But then is the time, when she has  
least influence to save them. Amidst the din of arms  
and the tumults of the people, they hear not her re-  
claiming voice; they regard not her benign persuasion;  
they are occupied with the passing and pressing events;  
they partake of the temper and spirit of the times; and  
in such times immorality and irreligion abound. But,



when we are settled down in peaceful and tranquil life, may it not be hoped, that we may be led to serious reflection, to a solemn consideration of the judgments and the mercies of the Lord, to attend to that religion, which is the firmest security of peace, which brings us peace with God, and is the chief good, the best hope, and the strongest bond of man and of human society?

Looking abroad to other nations, we behold, what wonders are wrought in the earth. The nations, which were lately and long engaged in the most terrible wars, are now enjoying an universal repose; and their Chiefs are assembled in a grand Congress, to effect a general pacification. Seldom or never, I believe, has such a scene been exhibited on the face of the earth. Rarely has there been so great a change so suddenly produced. The conqueror is fallen, and the world is at rest. The Providence of the Lord is "made manifest" in these mighty operations. What a happy and glorious change is wrought in the condition of so many nations, of so many millions of people. Glorious I deem it, "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" not to render them wretched, but to render them happy. If they are not all completely happy, yet they are happy comparatively with their former condition. The nations were repeatedly torn up from their foundations, and dashed together, and broken to pieces, in tremendous conflicts. We should account it a most happy and glorious change in the policy of the world, if the nations could be settled and preserved in peace, and justice, and friendly relations: And to observe justice on all sides would infallibly preserve the peace of all. We had hoped, that this most wise and happy policy would be the study and the consequence of the present assembly of Sovereigns and their ministers; that their long experience of the miseries of war and the crimes of ambition would persuade them to study to preserve the peace for a long time; to infix principles of justice in their own minds; to establish the nations with equity and with generosity; and, if

possible, to form some general system for adjusting disputes amicably without resorting to arms. We had hoped, that the magnanimity, which was admired in Alexander, would have been consummated, and would have crowned him with excellent glory, in this grand negociation. We had fondly hoped, that this surprising revolution might be the dawn of a brighter day, might introduce a new and happier order of things, to the afflicted world. We had even connected these views and hopes with the extensive exertions, that are made to diffuse the Word of truth, the Gospel of peace and salvation. But we fear, that they are still men, and kings, selfish, ambitious, avaricious, contending, perhaps fighting again, to divide the spoil, or to seize the prey. But we have no certain information. We would still enjoy the pleasing hope, while we may, that their past sufferings, or the sufferings of their people, and some sense of equity, of mercy, and of awful duty, may restrain their passions, and dispose them to follow counsels of reason and moderation, of universal and durable peace.

O ye Rulers of the people, ye Leaders and Commanders of the people, ye, who are set up on high, to be the Pastors and Guardians of the people; behold the woes and the horrors of war, "the distress and perplexity of nations," the horrid spectacle of men and nations driven on without reason to mutual slaughter; then contemplate your people prosperous and happy in the works, the improvements, the enjoyments of peace, the nations connected in amicable and beneficial relations and commerce; set these extremely contrasted scenes before your eyes, and let them penetrate to your hearts, and *learn war no more*. Learn truth, which you have seldom heard, learn truth, learn righteousness, learn wisdom, learn the fear of the Lord, "before whose judgment-seat you must stand;" and then will you learn to love and to preserve the peace of nations and of the world. Then will you learn a truth as obvious, as it is unknown, that

your glory consists, not in destroying, but in preserving your people ; your happiness, not in their misery, but in their prosperity. Then will you find the glory and the joy, which fly from your errors and your passions, which escape your blind and mad pursuit ; not the abject homage of fear and of hatred, of vice and of baseness ; but the true, the pure, the sublime glory and joy, to which the Universal and Perfect Sovereign exalts you, of being "His Ministers for good" to the people, the Benefactors, the Delight, and the admiration of mankind.

We conclude with two heads of *Improvement*, that have been proposed.

1. We have great reasons for gratitude to the Almighty Ruler. It is not without his will and his providence, that peace has visited our shores. It is the visitation of his mercy. He has visited us with his judgments : Now he visits us in his mercy. Let the joy, that has entered into our hearts, be raised in grateful offering to the throne of his grace. We are heartily glad ; let us be devoutly thankful. We heartily rejoice ; let us "rejoice in the Lord." Let us learn "to acknowledge God" in all things ; to think and to speak of all his wondrous works. Let us learn to revere his power, to fear his judgments, "to hope in his mercy," and to be grateful for all his benefits. Let us forget none of his benefits ; Oh let us not be of those, "who forget God." We have peculiar and strong reasons at present, to acknowledge and remember his mercy. \* "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits : Who forgiveth our iniquities ; who healeth our diseases ; who redeemeth our lives from destruction ; who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tendermercies. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide ; neither will he keep his anger forever. He

\* Psalm 103.

hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O our souls. \*O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High; Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help; Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and break their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

The language of inspiration offers the most suitable and worthy expressions of praise and thanksgiving; and it may be found adapted to all religious occasions. Thus saith the Lord, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me: and to him, that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God."† He is pleased to accept the praises of the unworthy race of men, as glorifying Him, "whose glory is above the heavens." Another most suitable and due expression of gratitude is to order our conversation, our conduct, aright before Him. His mercy is a great motive to this grateful duty; and our hope requires it, if we desire to trust in his providence and his grace, and to see the salvation of God, in time, and in eternity.

\* Psalm 107. † Psalm 50, 23.



2. From the occasion and the subject arise reasons for preserving peace, as much as lieth in us, as much and as long as possible. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."\*

I intended to make this argument a long one; but I have spoken long enough, and must make it a short one.

All that has been said, and all that can be said, of the evils of war, and of the blessings of peace, of the spirit of religion, and of the happiness of man, are arguments for preserving peace to the utmost point of reason, and of forbearance. We have had forcible, and pressing, and convincing arguments in the war, which is now ended; and, I presume, we are sufficiently disposed to listen to the doctrine and the duty of peace. Why are we here assembled this day? Why is the nation assembled this day? To give thanks for the blessing of peace. If it were not esteemed a blessing, if it were not esteemed preferable to war, or if it were accounted less eligible, we ought either to keep silence, or to keep a day of fasting and humiliation. We are not giving thanks for any thing, that we have gained; but simply for the blessing of peace. This act, this publick act speaks a language, which should be remembered, when our hostile passions are again excited. A great part of mankind seem eager to rush into war, and when they have tried it, they are as eager to escape from it; and peace on almost any terms is received as an occasion of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Thus do they bear the testimony of their own experience against the errors of their own opinions and passions. But I will suppose, that the greater part of civilized people, in their sober thought, when their passions are not roused, are convinced, that war is one of the most severe calamities, which afflict the human race. If they are not so convinced, I will hold the position, for my part, as certain and proved.

The question then is, How to avoid or avert this deadly evil?

\* Rom. 12, 18.

The publick sentiment must, if possible, and as far as possible, be set against it. We must accustom ourselves to think and to speak of peace, as one of the greatest of temporal blessings; of war as one of the greatest evils and scourges in this evil and sinful world; to which we should not resort but in unavoidable necessity. If we enjoy any freedom, the publick sentiment and publick voice, the prevalent voice, will produce its effect upon the acts and the character of the government.

It may be alleged, that wars are frequently necessary and unavoidable. If they are unavoidable, they cannot be avoided. But the necessity, that would justify them, should be an inevitable, or an indispensable necessity. Were this the rule of war, it would be much less frequent. We should not imagine, that our honor or interest requires us to revenge every offence with the whole body and blood of the nation. If such be the law of honor, we must always be fighting, all nations, and all men. As in private life, so in publick affairs, a more pacifick spirit would be more honorable and magnanimous; and very probably would be more happily successful in saving both our honor and prosperity. The wrathful Potentates of the earth, when they are hastening to war, often preface their declarations with praises of their forbearance, which they decorate with the style of magnanimity. We are not obliged to believe all their declarations; but we may see in them a concession to the sentiment and the truth, that forbearance may be magnanimous. If it be unwise to allow ourselves to be driven to madness by every offence; it is not less, but still more unwise, to suffer ourselves to be carried away with false or unreasonable prettexts, commonly tricked out to cover other designs and motives, which will not bear a disclosure. For this reason it is most conducive and even necessary to our peace, and every other good of society, that we should endeavor to acquire as much knowledge, as we can attain, and to

form an honest and sound judgment; that we may not be carried away by the wind of words, and deluded by false pretensions.

Again, there is an old and established maxim, that we must be prepared for war, that we may be able to maintain peace. This is not denied: And if we are prepared for war, with the love of peace and justice, we shall probably not often have much other trouble, than that of the preparation.

That we may preserve peace, we must cultivate justice. We must study to be just ourselves; to promote and support just principles, just measures, and just men; to discountenance, and reprobate, and lawfully and stedfastly oppose all injustice. We must take King David's rule for our rule, whether we be in office, or electors: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."\* A just nation and a just government will not intentionally do wrong to another nation; nor impute wrong to them without cause. They will make no wars from corrupt motives, from cupidity, intrigue, depraved ambition, lust of dominion, or mad passion. They will of course, on their part, as much as lieth in them, avoid all the wars, which flow from these principal and most abundant sources. Nor will other nations easily make war upon them. They will be respected. Occasions cannot easily be found or taken against them. If there be justice on the other side, as there may be, differences will be easily composed. But, if they must resist invasion, or intolerable injury, they will be strong in the right, in their principles and habits, in their union, in their united and virtuous energy, in the hope of the favor of Heaven, and probably in the favor and support of other powers.

All virtue is promotive of peace; as it is, of good order, and good government. The well principled, and well informed, will promote the well principled to places of trust and influence; and will encourage

\* 2 Samuel 23, 3.

and sustain good principles and upright measures. But, as David says, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked:" Or, as Daniel says, "The wicked will do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." The vicious and unprincipled are prepared for iniquity, for deceit, for violence, for corruption, for delusion, at home and abroad, as leaders, or as followers.

Finally, Religion is the firmest and surest foundation of all virtue, and justice, and peace, and goodness and happiness. There is an intimate and essential connexion between truth and righteousness and peace, and the fear of the Lord, and the love of God and of mankind. And to a people, "that is in such a case," there is high hope of Almighty favor and protection. Hear the word of the Lord. "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."\*

"The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."† "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."‡ "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land."||

\* 2 Chron. 15, 2. † Psalm 11. ‡ Isaiah 55. || Psalm 85.



NOTE—to Page 7, line 23. *Ambition, avarice.*] And whole cabinets of intriguers, unknown to us, who are not in the secret.

P. 13, l. 2. We may well suppose, that the British also had their particular reasons for making peace. They had been fighting long enough to be satisfied. They might prefer peace and commerce to a fruitless and costly revenge. They might wish to diminish, rather than to increase, their immense debt. Perhaps it is not assuming too much to ourselves, to suppose, that they might be willing to be rid of us, that they might turn all their attention and weight upon the affairs of Europe. Our cruisers also were very troublesome, and the trouble and damage would probably have been greatly increased, if we had been further obliged to make it our business and our defence.

P. 13, l. 30. *Where is boasting then?* Where? Every where, and in every case, and without blushing. We have had too much vaunting and bombast in the beginning, middle, and end of the tragedy. But the best performers have not been the most noisy declaimers. If big words, brave words, (prave words, as Captain Fluellen says of Ancient Pistol) if mighty words were forcible, as mighty deeds, or would pass for deeds abroad, as well as at home, we have had enough of them, to take all the British colonies on this continent, and even to make Old England, Scotland, and Ireland, our colonies.

Whether it be wise, or unwise, I cannot refrain from telling a little simple story, that I have somewhere read, or heard, or dreamt. One of our British Governors, (for they too can swell and puff,) Pownall, I believe, held a talk with the Indians, and he talked very stoutly, and threatened to bring against them as many men, as there were trees in the forest. An old Chief gruffly replied; Um—much—big—speak.

One of the soundest and sharpest of critics, Dr. Campbell, has long ago censured, somewhat severely, "the turgid dialect of America." But, perhaps, he knew not, that there may be as much cunning as folly in it. Perhaps he was too honest to know, what a French Philosopher has told us, (Mirabeau, I think): That words are things. Names stand for arguments. Words pass current for deeds. And great talking saves a great deal of trouble of well-doing, and is much more agreeable and acceptable.

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